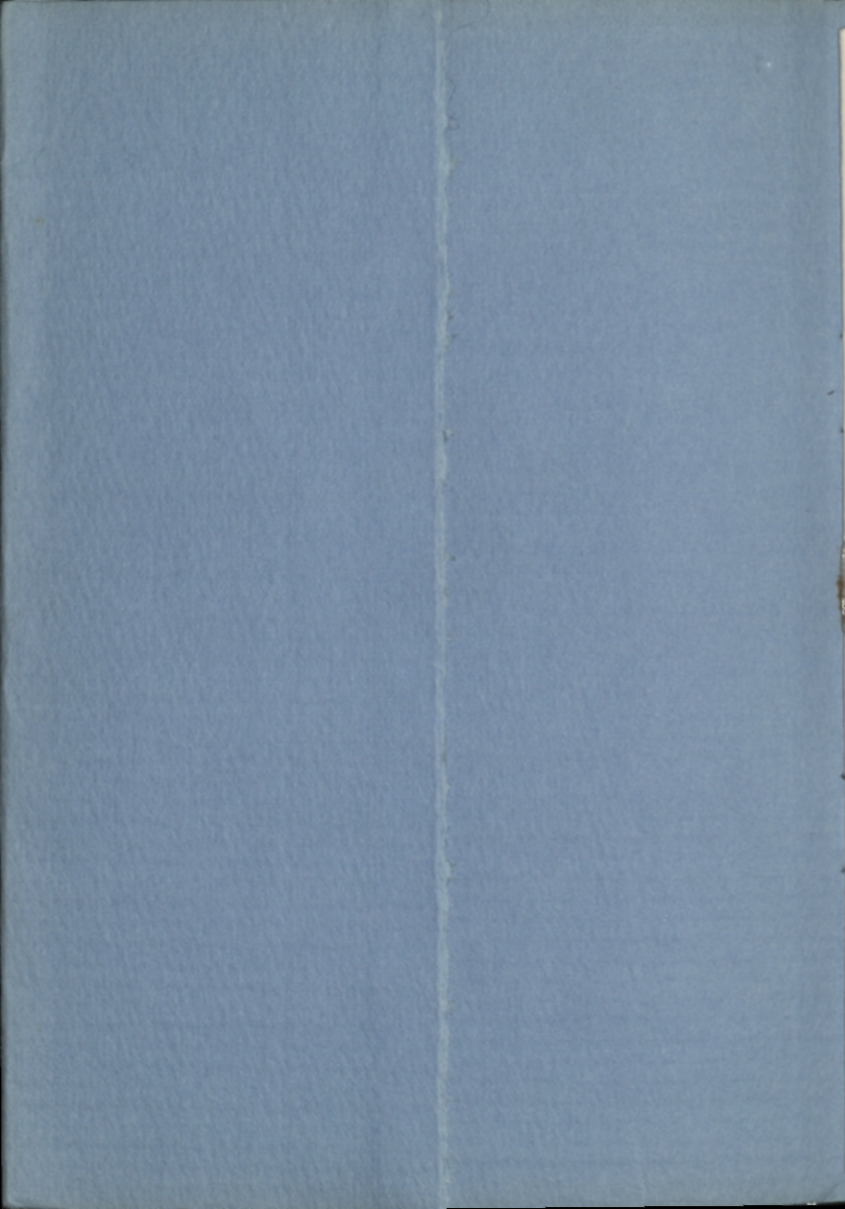


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The Lily of France



Decorative Fabrics of Distinction

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The Baptism of Clovis and the Battle of Tolbiac.
From a print published in 1488



THE figure of the fleur-de-lis, which for centuries was the regal emblem of the French monarchy, has an interesting history.

THE lily form appeared commonly as a motif in ancient decoration, having been used both in India and Egypt as a symbol of life and resurrection.

IT is possible that the wild flag or iris blossom was used in place of a scepter at the proclamation of the early Frankish kings. Thence it was conventionalized into the finial of a scepter and the ornament of a crown. Many of the seals of the ancient kings of France depict a monarch crowned

and sceptered in such a manner. The fleur-de-lis can have possessed no symbolic meaning when it was first used thus. It was adopted as a beautiful and appropriate form of decoration.

TRADITION attributed the introduction of the fleur-de-lis as a device of the French monarchy to Clovis, the founder of the Frankish kingdom. Clovis had married a Burgundian princess, who, being a Christian, was eager for the conversion of her husband. In one of his battles, Clovis swore that he would adopt the faith of his wife if God would grant him the victory. The enemy was overcome and the baptism of Clovis was celebrated with much ceremony at Reims on Christmas Day 496.

THERE are many legends connected with this baptism. One is that a white dove brought from Heaven a phial of holy



Louis IX represented on his Regal Chair tapestried in fleurs-de-lis. From a miniature of the 14th century

oil with which to anoint the sovereign. Another relates that the Virgin sent an angel to Clovis with a lily—her emblem, as a special mark of honor.

THE baptism of Clovis, and the king on the field of battle are both depicted in an accompanying illustration. The dove in the upper right hand corner of the picture is shown bringing the phial of holy oil. An angel brings a badge with the three fleurs-de-lis — apparently another interpretation of the Virgin's gift. The banners and coat of Clovis bear the same device, while the scepter shown in the picture of the baptism terminates in the lily form.

THE fleur-de-lis through long usage gradually took upon itself a symbolic significance. During the reign of Louis VII it was first accepted as having a special



A cut velvet with the French royal crown and
heraldic lilies. Period of Louis XIII

meaning. It became a definite device of France under Louis VIII, when the arms of the monarchy were "*d'azur, semé de fleurs de lis d'or*" — a blue field, irregularly strewn with gold fleurs-de-lis.

THE number of flowers on the shield of France was reduced by an edict of Charles V in 1376 to three—to symbolize the Holy Trinity. That number is thus shown in the drawing of the Baptism of Clovis, which, while representing an episode which took place almost a thousand years before, was published in 1488.

THE French fleurs-de-lis were incorporated into the royal coat-of-arms of England by Edward III, when through his mother, Queen Isabella, daughter of Philip the Fair, King of France, he laid claim to the crown of France. During the reign of Henry IV (of England) the number of fleurs-de-lis upon the English coat-of-arms was reduced to three, as it had been in France. It occurs thus on the coats-of-arms of all subsequent English kings up to the latter part of the reign of George III.



A cut velvet of the period of Louis XIII

AFTER its adoption upon the coat-of-arms of France, the fleur-de-lis became a common charge throughout the countries of Europe. The Crown as a special favor often allowed the royal emblem to be used upon individual coats-of-arms.

CHARLES VII ennobled the brothers of Jeanne d'Arc and granted them the name *Du Lis*, at the same time assigning to them the following coat-of-arms — "Azure, a sword in pale proper, hilted and supporting on its point an open crown or, between two fleurs-de-lis".



The Medici shield with the three lilies of France

IN recognition of valuable services to the French monarch, Louis XI, Piero de Medici, son of Cosimo, was

granted the use of the French fleurs-de-lis upon his coat-of-arms, and thereafter upon the shield of that illustrious banking family there appeared one blue ball charged with the three lilies of France surrounded by the red balls — the “pills” of the Medici.

THE fleur-de-lis as a motif of design occurs over and over again in every field of French decorative art. It was carved in stone, painted upon walls, wrought in precious metals, embroidered upon banners, surcoats and doublets, woven into textiles.

PICTURES of many of the French kings show them seated upon regal chairs, the backs and canopies of which are tapestried in fleurs-de-lis. Louis IX is thus represented and Francis I is also.

THE fleur-de-lis has been used both as an all-over textile pattern with no other element in the design, and as part of more elaborate patterns. Invariably it is regarded as a highly ornamental and significant motif of design.





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